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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001164

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: STEVENSON ATTACK COMMISSION POINTS FINGER AT GOZ

REF: REFTEL: HARARE 933 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher Dell for reasons 1.5 b/d

Summary

11. (SBU) Anti-Senate leader Morgan Tsvangirai held a Press Conference September 20 to announce the findings of the commission appointed by the anti-Senate MDC to investigate the July 2 attack on pro-Senate MDC MP Trudy Stevenson. According to Tsvangirai, the commission concluded that GOZ security forces most likely were behind the attack. In a private conversation with us, the Commission's Chairman said the report does indeed blame the GOZ. However, he said it does not rule out the possibility that local anti-Senate MDC elements were involved in the attack, albeit possibly as a result of GOZ infiltration and manipulation of the MDC. While he publicly embraced the report's evidence of a state conspiracy, Tsvangirai has rejected some of the commission's critical findings concerning his and his faction's responsibility for violence. The state-controlled media's account of the report, meanwhile, falsely claims the report blames Tsvangirai for the attack. Finally, the pro-Senate faction of the MDC continues to dismiss the commission and by extension its report as biased. End Summary.

Commission Concludes State Likely Culprit

12. (SBU) Commission Chairman Haplias Zhou told poloff on September 19 the commission had concluded that the Central Intelligence Organization and police most likely assaulted the pro-Senate MDC officials on July 2 (reftel). Zhou said that the sophisticated nature of the attack and the remarkably swift manner of the police response led the commission to its conclusion. Zhou added that the seven

suspects charged with the attack appeared to be unconnected to the assault and to have been coerced by police. (N.B. The seven are currently on bail and are awaiting a High Court decision on their application to remove the magistrate presiding over their trial, whom they accuse of bias.)

13. (SBU) Zhou said the commission also found a high level of intelligence and police infiltration of the local MDC structures, which further pointed to the state's involvement, according to Zhou. During its investigation, the commission discovered that opposition figures at both the district and provincial levels Q) the commission did not investigate the national level Q) maintained frequent contact with supposedly sympathetic elements of the CIO and police. Zhou said that these contacts were naQve and gave the state avenues to manipulate the opposition. Many of the commission's recommendations focused on tightening security and preventing such infiltrations.

(But Cannot Dismiss Local MDC Involvement

14. (SBU) Zhou said that the commission also developed two alternative, albeit less likely scenarios. The commission could not rule out the possibility that anti-Senate MDC MP Mubawu orchestrated the attack to prevent the other opposition faction from making inroads into his constituency.

Just before the attack, Mubawu, who has a reputation as a dirty politician, had declared Tafara-Mabvuku a "no-go" area for the pro-Senate faction. Likewise, the commission could not rule out the possibility that district-level anti-Senate

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MDC officials, who had long-standing disagreements with Mubawu, carried out the attack to tarnish the local MP by implicating him in the violence.

Commission Findings Spun By All Sides

15. (SBU) At a diplomatic briefing to announce the commission's findings on September 21, anti-Senate MDC President Tsvangirai said the report) which he promised would be available shortly - unequivocally showed that the CIO carried out the attack. Tsvangirai, however, said that he disagreed with some of the commission's findings, such as the commission's criticism of the party's handling of past incidents of violence and its perpetrators.

16. (SBU) Meanwhile, the state-controlled Herald newspaper on September 21 ran a front page headline falsely claiming that the "MDC probe nails Tsvangirai" and proceeds to blame the opposition leader for fanning violence. The report quoted Stevenson as saying that Tsvangirai could not be absolved because the attackers accused her of deserting him. The Herald also claimed the report found that weaknesses in Tsvangirai's leadership led to the attack.

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17. (SBU) For its part, the pro-Senate faction, which did not have a part in appointing the commission and has been critical of it, dismissed the commission's finding that the anti-Senate leadership was not to blame. Pro-Senate spokesman Chaibva was quoted in the independent media saying that the pro-Senate faction did not "wish to waste time on the self-serving and cleansing exercise whose findings we have always maintained were predetermined."

Comment

18. (C) Although discounted and distorted by the pro-Senate

faction and the GOZ, we have always believed the commission to be credible. The three lawyers on the body, all of whom are well known to the Embassy, are widely respected throughout the legal community. Furthermore, after its establishment, the commission received no financial support or instructions from the MDC. Tsvangirai's response to the report) including his chaffing at the report's criticisms and his failure to embrace openly and clearly the calls for changes within his party) as well as the party's inexplicable delays in its release may be disappointing but are further proof of the commission's independence and of its report's credibility. We find it entirely plausible that the CIO was behind the attack, though perhaps through the agency of some MDC types under their influence.

19. (C) In that regard, it should not have come as a revelation that the CIO and police had infiltrated the opposition. What was interesting, however, was Zhou's take on how they had accomplished this penetration, not through bribery and stealth as one might assume but rather through regular contact. While there are no doubt genuinely sympathetic voices in the state apparatus that give valuable intelligence to the opposition, the commission report should serve as a wake up call for opposition leaders to take greater caution in dealing with the CIO and other security organs.
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